



## **An Outline concerning the formal Conditions of Community based on Umberto Eco's Concept of the Encyclopedia and Charles Peirce's Semeiotic**

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**An Outline concerning the formal Conditions of Community based on  
Umberto Eco's Concept of the Encyclopedia  
and Charles Peirce's Semeiotic**

by Torkild Thellefsen, Bent Sørensen, Martin Thellefsen & Nidal Seide

Thought ... is in itself  
essentially of the nature of a  
sign. But a sign is not a sign  
unless it translates itself into  
another sign in which it is  
more fully developed. ...  
Thought must live and grow  
incessant new and higher  
translation, or it proves itself

not to be a genuine thought  
(CP 5.594, 1903).

## **Introduction**

A community is a social unit of divergent size that shares a common goal, ideal and values. This is a standard definition in most theories of communities (cf. Canuto, Marcello A. & Jason Yaeger (2000), Christensen, K., et al. (2003)) The concept is thoroughly investigated in both psychology and the social sciences e.g. sociology, anthropology. There are of course many types of communities, and many different philosophical views on communities (e.g. Vico, Kant, Royce, Dewey, Gadamer, Apel). Some researchers do not even accept the term community. Stacey (1969) called it a non-concept; other researchers offer classifications of communities and divide them into general categories as: Place, Interest and Communion (Willmott 1986; Lee and Newby 1983; and Crow and Allen 1995). Place is understood in geographical terms e.g. a community can develop at a working place. According to the literature, this type of community is also called a location; hence, it is the place and time of the community that creates it. The second category - the community of interest is based on a shared interest rather than a location even though these categories may overlap. The third category is communion. In the weakest form of the concept it is as a sense of attachment to a place, group or idea (whether there is a 'spirit of community' or a "sense of community). In its strongest form 'communion' entails a profound meeting or encounter – not just with other people, but also with God and/or creation. Of course these categories overlap; e.g. fan cultures could involve both place interest and communion. This classification of communities seems to imply a growth of complexity from place to communion, however as the categories mingle it is quite difficult

to say that a religious community is more complex than a workplace community. However, they are, of course, different in content.

Category	Examples
Place	National Work place Urban life Wild life Villages
Interest	Brands Fan cultures sports Discourse community/knowledge domains Political Internet
Communion	Philosophical directions Religious communities

Cohen (1982; 1985) argues that communities are best approached as communities of meaning. In this sense - we believe - the creation of communities could be understood as a process of signification (or semeiosis). Cohen states that the reality of a community lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity (Cohen 1985: 118). Consequently, this notion of community implies both similarity and difference. It seems to involve a relational idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities (Cohen 1985: 118). The above-mentioned concepts of community rest on different conceptual foundations. However, it seems to be a common trait that most of the concepts build upon social constructivism as it is the case with Cohen's; which in some measure disregards truth and reality and also our biological sense of community.

It is not our errand to discuss further the above mentioned literature concerning different concepts of community; here we have just acknowledged that the concept has a long and also a rather complex philosophical (cf. Gadamer 1975: 19ff) and scientific history. Our errand with this article is, rather, to outline the formal conditions of community, or to articulate a concept that seems to cover - at least - the most common types of communities - e.g. communities of location, of interest, of communion, of meaning, international communities, national communities, religious communities, political communities, brand communities, virtual communities, formalized communities and more loosely defined communities. These formal conditions we believe can be deduced from the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco's (1936 -) theory of cognition in

relation to his concept of the encyclopedia and from the semeiotic of the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839 - 1914). Hence, inspired by Eco's concept of the encyclopedia we believe that a community is a community of knowledge - whether this knowledge is cultural, scientific, artistic, tacit, emotional etc. In principle Eco's encyclopedia also covers all knowledge from the beginning of man to his end. And speaking of man, it is, of course, a mere truism, that a community must involve, of course not necessarily in the present, but at least virtually or in the past, some members. Inspired by Peirce we believe that these members have a semeiotic character because as Peirce did state more than once "man is a symbol". This at first maybe curious-appearing statement simply means that everything experienceable is constituted by the interplay of signs and that man too - his feelings, thought and language - and his communities of course, are examples of the role of signs in human existence. Peirce himself did develop a notion of community; however, this notion concerns a scientific community or a community of inquirers (cf. CP 5.311, 5.316) including a strong relation to methodology and methods (going from doubt to belief and the search for truth and thereby representing reality), and here we want to pursue the broadest concept of community possible not limiting ourselves to certain types of communities. Nevertheless, inspired by Peirce, we furthermore believe that a community is a real unit; or put in other words: a community has the power of finding or creating its members, and then the members, on the other hand, can affect, develop, and transform etc. the community - a community is not something which simply and solely exists in our minds; true, it is a construction, however, it also has a real being. Hence, combining our inspiration stemming from both Eco and Peirce in the following we will elaborate on the above mentioned points and try to make an outline of the formal conditions for community - firstly, we will take a look at Eco's encyclopedia and his three important cognitive concepts: The Cognitive Type (CT),

the Nuclear Content (NC) and the Molar Content (MC). Secondly, we will take a look at Peirce's notion of man as a symbol; the consequences of viewing man as a symbol, the idea of synechism, the idea of growth, and the idea of habit formation. Or in short: what does it mean that man is a symbol? Thirdly and finally, we will try to outline the formal conditions for community.

### **The Encyclopedia of Eco**

The encyclopedia - after Eco's realistic turn in 1999 marked by his book *Kant and the Platypus* does involve process and thereby temporality, it has beginnings and history, it has a here-and-nowness and it has a future and it is in some way governing how we interpret reality - with Emerson's words of the Sphinx: of thine eyes - I am eyebeam. We can only interpret what the symbols, or what our knowledge allows us to interpret - the encyclopedia is our eyebeam - this is in full compliance with Peirce's idea of the growth of symbols. Indeed, on

e of Peirce's most famous quotes involves the sphinx's eyebeam (cf. CP 2.302). We believe that Eco will agree with Peirce, when Peirce says that "You mean nothing, which we have not taught you and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought" (CP 5.313). Eco writes the following concerning the encyclopedia:

The encyclopedia is the only means we have of giving an account, not only of the workings of any semiotic system, but the life of a given culture as a system of interlocking semiotic systems (Eco 2014: 51).

The encyclopedia contains knowledge, cultural, everyday, scientific and tacit knowledge it contains knowledge or is a format - with Eco - when: "we refer to when talking to a scientist, to an educated person, to a farmer, to an inhabitant of a far-off country" (Eco 2014: 72). The encyclopedia is a socio cultural format organized into a highly complex network of interpretants – hence Eco borrows the concept concerning the interpretant from Peirce (cf. Eco 1984: 127). The interpretant is the (potential) significance of the sign and it refers to the same object as the sign represents (cf. W 2: 53-54). The interpretant itself is another sign having a representative potential which in its turn must have another interpretant and so on ad infinitum hence showing the dynamics or the possible development of the encyclopedia (cf. Eco 1976: 68). But the interpretant for Peirce is not "simply and solely" located on a semantic level (of signification). Rather, the interpretant also concerns (potential) emotional and energetic effects on the interpreter (cf. CP 4. 536). And with the "realist" Eco we can indeed understand the encyclopedia as structured according to the cognitive concepts: The Cognitive Type (CT), which is a private emotional first perception of a sign - the first step in a process of signification; Nuclear Content (NC), which is parts of the perception ascribed to a whole e.g. a horse and its features; and Molar Content (MC), which is the extra knowledge we apply to phenomena such as the cultural settings we place horses in, or extra knowledge about how we act (appropriate) at a funeral or a wedding etc.; The MC bears resemblance to George Lakoff's concept of idealized cognitive models (ICM) (Lakoff 1987), since they are cognitive guidelines for our behavior. These cognitive types are related to different kinds of



associations. Eco states that the CT is related to iconicity (Eco 1999) - which seems to be an association of resemblance. Based on Peirce we interpret that the NC is related to the association of contiguity (part and whole) and we interpret the MC is related to the association of interest. Eco writes about the relationship between the encyclopedia and the cognitive concepts:

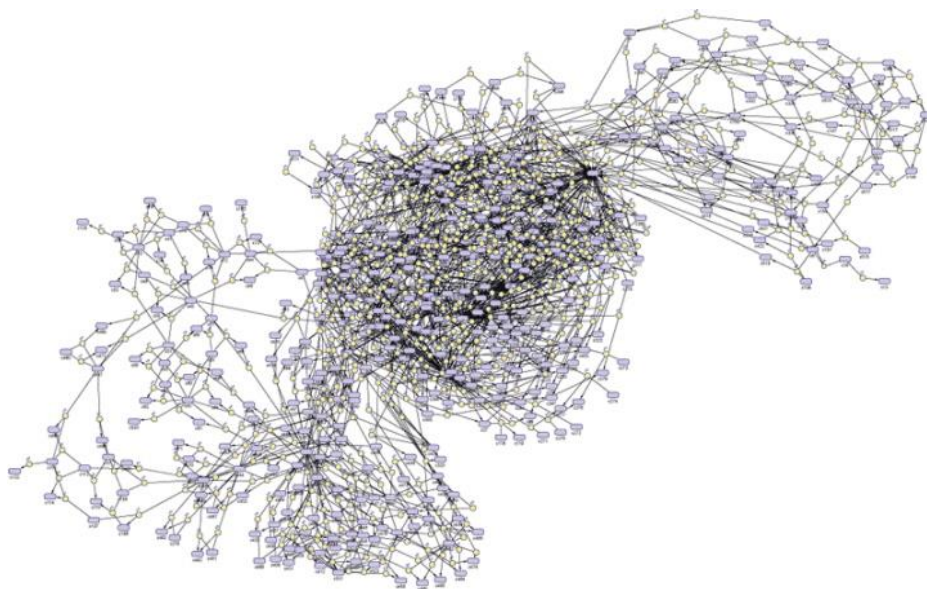
In Kant and the Platypus I discussed the difference between Nuclear Content (NC) - a set of interpretants on the basis of which both a lay person and a naturalist can agree on the properties evoked by the term mouse, both understanding in the same way the sentence *there is a mouse in the kitchen* - and Molar Content (MC), which represents specialized knowledge that a naturalist may have of a mouse. We are justified...in thinking that there is on the one hand there is a...encyclopedia...shared in the present case by both the naturalist and the common native speaker...and on the other an unmanageable plethora of Specialized Encyclopedias, the complete collection of which would constitute the unattainable Maximal Encyclopedia (Eco 2014: 72).

The encyclopedia can be understood in terms of a multi-dimensional network of relations, where clusters of ideas - via the dynamics of CTs, NCs and MCs - make up cultural knowledge and if we can visualize the encyclopedia we will be able to see how knowledge is related. Eco imagines that we can go from one idea in the encyclopedia to another - sometimes even in a split second as for example in the case of the creative metaphor (cf. Eco 1976: 284); other times it takes considerable more interpretative efforts of course - this because the foundation of the encyclopedia can be seen to rest

upon Peirce's doctrine of synechism where all signs - potentially - are connected and swims in continua (cf. CP 1.171). Eco writes the following:

If we were to expand the network of linked nodes ad infinitum, from a concept assumed as type it would be possible to retrace, from the center to the outermost periphery, the entire universe of the other concepts, each of which may in turn become the center, thereby generating by all the others (2014: 57).

The following model is taken from a paper on biology<sup>133</sup> and the model depicts a small section of a biological system in an organism, however, we believe that it may also serve as a visual metaphor that shows how a part of Eco's encyclopedia is structured.



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<sup>133</sup> <https://jasmine71.wordpress.com/2009/03/23/debunking-evolution-in-laymans-terms/>

**Figure 1.** All knowledge in the encyclopedia is connected through different kinds of associations and CTs, NCs, and MCs. Some concepts are closer related maybe due to a stronger similarity or because they are part of a part-whole relation - e.g. making up ideals, ends, worldviews, interests, but maybe also tasks and limits

The encyclopedic cluster in the middle of the figure could be a specific community which is firmly structured and therefore fully recognized also affecting the identity of its members and their degree of cohesiveness - hence, it could be a religious community, a fan community, or anything where there is a feeling of ours, a feeling of belonging to at certain community.

But what happens if we now - inspired by Peirce - try to see the members of the community as symbols and the encyclopedic community as such as an overall symbolic structure too?

### **Man as a symbol**

Let us look into Peirce's notion of the symbol, his doctrine of synechism and his theory of community. In order to do this we must understand man in the same way as we understand knowledge and concepts that also make up the encyclopedia. We remember how Peirce states that man is a sign:

Signs, the only things with which a human being can, without derogation, consent to have any transaction, being a sign himself, are triadic; since a sign denotes a

subject, and signifies a form of fact, which latter it brings into connexion with the former (CP 6.344)

More specifically man is a symbol, and in order to understand what that means, we must compare man to other symbols:

We have already seen that every state of consciousness [is] an inference; so that life is but a sequence of inferences or a train of thought. At any instant then man is a thought, and as thought is a species of symbol, the general answer to the question what is man? Is that he is a symbol. To find a more specific answer we should compare man with some other symbol (CP 7.583).

Or in order to understand man as a symbol we must understand - at least - two things: 1. The nature of symbols; 2. The sense of community as a universal and local phenomenon. In "The Art of Reasoning (c. 1895), Peirce writes the following:

*Symbols grow.* They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols. *We think only in signs.* These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. *So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow.* *Omne symbolum de symbolo. A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples.* *In use and in experience, its meaning grows.* Such words as force, law, wealth, marriage, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our

barbarous ancestors. The symbol may, with Emerson's sphynx, say to man, *Of thine eye I am eyebeam*. (CP 2.302)

But what can we learn about symbols from the Peircean quote? The Peirce scholar Winfried Nöth has written an excellent paper "The growth of signs" (2014), where he examines Peirce's idea of the growth of symbols in particular. Nöth makes an interesting observation when he states that "For Peirce, growth is a "law of mind" (CP 6.21), a law of "general development of reason" (CP 1.615) as well as a law of the evolution of nature and the entire cosmos (CP 6.101). (: 173) and to these observation, we may add that Peirce also saw association as the great law of mind (cf. CP 7.515); we do believe associations - or with the terminology stemming from Eco CTs, NCs and MCs - are what make the content of the encyclopedia grow, in fact associations are what make symbols grow, the only active mechanism in the mind, "Association is the only force which exists within the intellect" (CP 7.453). Signs such as mind, thought, reason and symbols grow. Another interesting point Nöth makes is that the growth of signs takes place in a continuum or phases of transition and transformation - growth is possible and a reality, this is where symbols grow (cf. Nöth 2014: 174). Nöth calls our attention to the fact that Peirce's idea of symbols and their growth is very modern. It is self-reflexive, autopoietic, not in a Maturana and Varela sense, there is not a closed "domain of relation" here (cf. Nöth 176), this is a semeiosis going on throughout a continuum. The self-reflexiveness of symbols means that "when human minds study the evolution of nature, they also study their own evolution. Nature has thus become self-reflexive: symbols, which have evolved from nature, begin to reflect on the nature from which they have evolved" (Nöth 2014: 175). Nöth's point is that the laws human minds discover are the same law human mind

emanated from; these laws are symbols and they grow. When dealing with those symbols we find in Eco's encyclopedia, which are icons, indices and symbols the growth takes place through interpretations of the symbols - a development from CT to NC to MC - or from icon to index to symbol involving habit formation. According to Peirce the symbol is a fuller developed sign than the icon and the index - likewise must the MC be a fuller developed sign than the CT and the NC.

Peirce developed a method to investigate the meaning of symbols, his pragmatism. In "Issues of Pragmatism" (1905), Peirce defines pragmatism in the following way: "Pragmatism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct" (CP 5.442). And further in "Pragmatism" (1905) "... pragmatism does not undertake to say in what the meanings of all signs consist, but merely to lay down a method of determining the meanings of intellectual concepts, that is, of those upon which reasonings may turn. (CP 5.8). And in a letter to Signor Calderone (1905), Peirce writes: "Now pragmatism is simply the doctrine that the inductive method is the only essential to the ascertainment of the intellectual purport of any symbol" (CP 8.209). Consequently, pragmatism is a method that can be used to investigate the meaning of symbols. Combined with the fact that the symbol contains a potential, some of it may have been explored and caused an interpretative habit represented by the symbol but the meaning of the symbol rests in the future, its "esse in futuro" and every time the symbol becomes interpreted its meaning grows - it spreads amongst the peoples, as Peirce write. The scientific growth of symbols is only a specialized one. When symbols grow, they alter meaning, not necessarily a radical alteration, quite often the contrary. Peirce mentions a concept such as marriage, which had a very different meaning to Peirce and his time when compared with their barbarous ancestors. Today marriage does not mean the same to us than it did to Peirce, the meaning

of the symbol has grown through use and experience. Peirce also uses the concept of electricity to prove his point (CP. 5.313). This is an interesting notion, since the concept in its historical light with all its meaning is part of Eco's encyclopedia. The content of the encyclopedia also alter through use and experience; this might suggest at pragmatic angle to the encyclopedia. The concepts in the encyclopedia have a history, and are result of semeiosis.

Summing up, we know that symbols grow through use and experience. We know that symbols create habits and represent habits - interpretative habits. We know that Peirce defines symbols the same way he defines ideas. "Three elements go to make up an idea. The first is its intrinsic quality as a feeling. The second is the energy with which it affects other ideas, an energy which is infinite in the here-and-nowness of immediate sensation, finite and relative in the recency of the past. The third element is the tendency of an idea to bring along other ideas with it" (CP 6.135). Symbols have an intrinsic quality (icons), they have a force with which they can affect other ideas (indices) and they have a tendency to bring along other ideas. Adding to this, Nöth writes that "Icons are needed to show what we are talking about and indices to connect our thoughts to the reality which they represent. Symbols are associated to the objects they represent by habits" (2014: 177) - and as Peirce states, a symbol, in itself is only a dream - it needs an icon and an index (cf. CP 4.52). If we are symbols, we contains icons - an intrinsic quality so we can be identified, we contains indices so we are connected to reality and are able to affect other humans; and we possess a tendency to connect to other persons.

To this we may add that Peirce doctrine of synechism makes it possible for symbols to grow and to connect. The tendency to bring along other ideas is the synechistic element in symbols, the element of Thirdness. In several places, Peirce defines synechism

by aid of rather poetic philosophic thoughts, in one place he states that no synechist must say I am altogether myself and not at all you (cf. CP 7.571); and in an unfinished manuscript c. 1867, Peirce asks the following rhetorical question:

But are we shut up in a box of flesh and blood? When I communicate my thought and my sentiments to a friend with whom I am in full sympathy, so that my feelings pass into him and I am conscious of what he feels, do I not live in his brain as well as in my own — most literally?

The answer is of course no. We are not shut up in a box of flesh and blood. We - because we are symbols - are related or can be related in continua. Some ideas in the broadest sense of the term are more attractive, interesting, appealing etc. to us than other ideas, this has to do with the presentative character of the sign - the more a given sign is capable of representing parts of us or parts that we want the sign to represent (maybe a mere fanciful wish), the more forceful the attraction seems to be. It comes down to how well an idea is capable of representing us, when dealing with communities. It has to do with a sense of ours, a sense of belonging to something; and now we are at the crux of the matter. How can we then describe the formal conditions for community?

### **Sense of community**

A community is a semeiotic or symbolic structure in the sense that a community is created, maintained and developed through ongoing exchanges of signs in accordance with a certain purpose. The exchange of signs takes place between the members of the community assembled around a governing and basic idea. But in what does the semeiotic



process consist that creates a community? In his book "A General Introduction to the semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce" (1996), Litzka mentions the concept "A sense of community". Although Peirce never directly used the expression "sense of community" in his writings, it can be deduced implicitly from the following excerpt:

...whether the genus homo has any existence except as individuals, is the question whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth, and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the community is to be considered as an end in itself (CP 8.38).

Peirce goes on to note, moreover and most importantly, that "Esprit de corpse, national sentiment, sympathy, are no mere metaphors. None of us can fully realize what the minds of corporations are, anymore than one of my brain cells can know what the whole brain is thinking" (CP 6.271). Peirce concludes that human beings are: "mere cells of the social organism" (CP 1.673). Peirce's notion of "community conscience" (CP 1.56), is, thus, construable as our notion of sense of community. Similarly, Litzka (1996: 91) notes that Peirce's notion is:

simply *the sense of the community* of experience shared commonly between utterer and interpreter, sense understood in its broadest terms - the effect of a sign as would enable a person to say whether or not the sign was applicable to anything concerning which that person had sufficient acquaintance. (: 91)

Liszka equates the sense of community with Peirce's notions *commens*, which Peirce (1977: 196-197), defines as follows:

There is the *Intentional* Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the utterer; the *Effectual* Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the interpreter; and the *Communicational* Interpretant, or say the *Cominterpretant*, which is a determination of that mind into which the minds of utterer and interpreter have to be fused in order that any communication should take place. This mind may be called the commens. It consists of all that is, and must be, well understood between utterer and interpreter, at the outset, in order that the sign in question should fulfill its function. (EP 2:478)

The idea of a "sense of community" is very interesting since it can refer to both a community sense and a sense of community (as a biological sense). The community sense refers to and develops in the single community, which means that the community sense is a local general symbol. It is local, since it exists and becomes meaningful in the single community, and general since it is mediated by signs, and thereby it is able to be communicated among the community members, and from the community to potential members outside the community. Peirce explains the relation between an individual symbol and a general symbol in the following way:

A man walking with a child points his arm up into the air and says, "There is a balloon." The pointing arm is an essential part of the symbol without which the latter would convey no information. But if the child asks, "What is a balloon," and the man replies, "It is something like a great big soap bubble," he makes the image

a part of the symbol. Thus, while the complete object of a symbol, that is to say, its meaning, is of the nature of a law, it must denote an individual, and must signify a character. A genuine symbol is a symbol that has a general meaning. There are two kinds of degenerate symbols, the Singular Symbol whose Object is an existent individual, and which signifies only such characters as that individual may realize; and the Abstract Symbol, whose only Object is a character (CP 2.293).

It seems to be in coherence with Peirce, to call the single community in the encyclopedia an individual symbol and the whole encyclopedia consisting of myriads and myriads of communities as an abstract symbol.

The sense of community is the general sense that enables us to enter into communities and, as a sense, it must be understood in relation to any of our other senses, i.e. the ability of the brain to interpret messages from sensory cells so that these refer to the different sense modalities, e.g. visual, auditory, tactile etc.

According to Peirce, there are three conditions for community to be met in order for a community to be established: *The first condition* is that the given members of a community must have a sign-interpretative capacity to some degree; they must be able to communicate and interpret signs, they must be able to let themselves be represented by the community idea. Consequently, they must be capable of causing and representing interpretants. *The second condition* is that there must be some sort of connection or relation, of a communicative sort, between the sign users. *The third condition* is that there must be some sense of community between the members, which is a feeling of "ours" (cf. Liszka 1996 p. 83). The sense of community is maintained by the ongoing sharing of signs between the members. Liszka elaborates on these conditions:

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The first condition allows the possibility of the second, since signs enable us to transform objects or events into meanings, which in turn allow the possibility of something. Being shared and shared in a communicative fashion. The second condition allows for the possibility of the third, since identifying shared meanings as “ours” assumes that there is, first of all, something to be shared. (Liszka 1996 p. 83)

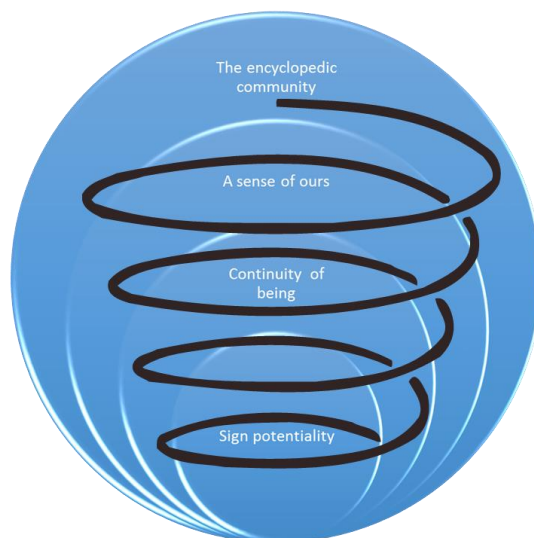
It is possible, based on these conditions to analyse a community, however, based on the notion that man is a symbol, man will always-already participate in communities, this is a condition for and natural part of the being of man - because symbols grow, the meaning of man grows, and, hence, communities grow. We believe that there are at least three ways to be attracted, to and to attract symbols, and these ways are exactly based on our sense of community. The first way is to attract and be attracted to ideas, which we believe are able to represent us, these signs must possess a presentative potential so that we can recognize them in one way or the other (iconicity). The second way building on the first is attraction to others (indexicality) also standing in a meaningful relation to them including empathy, and the third way is the experience of (genuine) interest, intent and desires (symbolicity). This is what we believe is at play in a encyclopedic community of symbols - itself being a symbol.

### **The Encyclopedia of Community**

So what can we deduce from these encyclopedic and semeiotically inspired thoughts regarding the formal conditions of communities? Man is a symbol, thus his meaning

grows because this is his nature - man grows through interpretation and he grows in information. Being a symbol and a thought, he must develop into a fuller sign. Man begins his life as a symbol, dominated by potentiality (iconicity) as he grows up he becomes more and more dominated by habits - his meaning grows and he grows in information as he becomes more and symbolic - also, of course, entering into different communities. This development follows that of the universe from Firstness, to Secondness to Thirdness - from potential, to actualization to crystallization of habits (cf. CP 6.33), to death from where a new potential may arise. Along this journey, man has - being a dynamical object - caused signs to emerge and develop, left behind signs, created growth, he has attracted, presented and represented signs - maybe he has even with Peirce participated in executing "our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable (CP 1.615); most importantly his meaning has grown through other symbols by entering into communities. We also believe this is what Peirce means, when he states that we in principle cannot know more about ourselves than others can, we lack the ability to introspection (cf. CP 5.224-226). The movement of signs are first and foremost into our minds from outside through our senses - nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuerit in sensu (CP 5.181); and from there we communicate signs into the continuum, create communities and attract each other, searching for the feeling of ours; and when we find it, we maybe are able to learn about ourselves and then our information will grow. Based on the structure of Eco's encyclopedia, we can say that humans in some way are connected through symbols in continua making up different communities. The encyclopedic communities are socio-cultural formats organized into networks of interpretants - interpretants that also evoke emotional and energetic effects on the members (interpreters) of the communities. The idea of the great community of

the encyclopedia concerns the idea that the encyclopedia of man started when he began to walk the earth. This evolutionary view is important to underline since growth implies development. It is of course a bit tedious to conclude that all human beings in some way are connected. However, this is not our point - our point is that it is through the communities we are a part of that we - in one way or the other - are connected as symbols in different encyclopedias. The communities vary in size and in levels of formalization etc. of course and they can be religious communities, fan communities, national communities, political communities, brand communities and so on, however, all these types of communities are basically related through a cognitive dynamics, associations and symbols - man is a symbol and the community is an overall encyclopedic symbol (or a maximal encyclopedia with the words Eco). We began this article by stating that the concept of community we will advocate for is a concept that involves continuity, growth and is realistic, and let us now sum up the formal conditions for community that we believe are three and three only.



**Figure 2.** The 3 formal conditions of community: **sign potentiality, continuity of being and a sense of ours**; the three conditions are, of course, interrelated and interdependent. Each condition is of equal importance, a lack of any of them, and the community falls.

Firstly, the possibility of having and using signs organizing these into encyclopedias - man is a symbol himself and his symbols are organized in different local encyclopedias; e.g. the members of a community must be able to transform their experiences, objects and events into meanings - via cognitive types, nuclear contents and molar contents - that can be shared with other members. Without signs the members of the community cannot perceive, feel, think, nor act, and there will be nothing to share and no encyclopedias to form and to develop.

Secondly, there must be a relation between the members or a possible continuum - as can be seen from the encyclopedia where concepts, knowledge, associations etc. integrate into networks and structures. Peirce puts it in the following way: "All communication from mind to mind is through continuity of being." (CP 7.572). The very relation or continuum also allows for a process; and a process always involves time, development, and maybe growth (symbols grow with Peirce) - communities form, they develop, they disintegrate and disappear. The symbols that a member of community uses have a history, but does also, in principle, point to the future or have a tendency to connect to other symbols (and thereby other members of the community). In short there is a

reciprocal relation between the signs (symbols) and the community, or they are co-extensive.

Thirdly, there must be an - at least implicit - “sense of ours” between the members of the community or the members must share a part of a continuous process of representing and interpreting signs, they must identify and to some degree be sympathetic with that part of the continuum or the local encyclopedia. Peirce states this formal condition very nicely. He writes that a member of a community:

... identifies himself in sentiment with a Community of which he is a member, and which includes, for example, besides his momentary self, his self of ten years hence; and he speaks of the resultant cognitive compulsions of the course of life of the community as Our Experience (CP 8.101)

The members of the community - the past, present, and future members - must therefore perceive or understand some experiences, events, objects, circumstances etc. - making up a part of a continuum into an encyclopedia - as identical or similar, maybe becoming objects of desire, interest, ideals, efforts and so on. The third formal condition also points toward the fact that a community is a real unit. Because e.g. the “sense of ours” is a sense or a general faculty in all humans. Peirce himself - as we remember - asked the rhetorical question: “Whether men really have anything in common, so that the community is to be considered as an end in itself (CP 8.38). The question can be answered in different ways but here we will just point to the fact that (the mature) Peirce himself advocated for a realistic epistemology as well as ontology (cf. CP 5.77, n1; Fisch 1986: 195), and as a consequence we can define a community as a natural class (cf. Hulswit 1994), where it is



the community that gives life to the members of the community or with Peirce: "...it confers upon them the power to work out results in the world...it confers upon them...organic existence, or, in a word, life." (CP 1.220).

We believe that the three formal conditions for community form a relation of inclusion or integration where the second formal condition builds on the first formal condition, and where the third formal condition builds on the first two formal conditions, respectively. Hence, there must be signs by means of which (communicative) relationships can be established between the members of a community - transforming experiences, objects etc. into meanings - whereby there is something to be shared between the members and a "feeling of ours" can develop creating local encyclopedias. We further believe that a study of community can take its point of departure in the formal conditions making the community possible and thereby making accessible three different - but closely interlinked - level of analysis.

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<sup>i</sup> On the question of proper names see also Marian Hobson *J. Derrida opening lines* (New York: Routledge, 1998) in particular the chapter *Singular and proper names*.

<sup>ii</sup> This second sense of property, as Derrida often admits, is taken in consideration by Heidegger after the *Kehre* by the introduction of the concept of *Ereignis*. See above all 'Given time: the time of the King', in J. Derrida, *Signatures*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 2013).

<sup>iii</sup> About Derrida's reading of Hegel in *Glas* see: Simon Critchley, A commentary upon Derrida's reading of Hegel in *Glas*, in *Hegel after Derrida*, (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>iv</sup> See Jane Marie Todd, 'Autobiography and the case of signature: reading Derrida's *Glas*' (*Comparative Literature*, 38:1), pp. 72 and following and Marc C. Taylor, *Altarity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 270 and following.